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St. Louis Public Library

A GUIDE TO
THE CENTRAL BUILDING
FOR
LIBRARIANS



ST. LOUIS

1917

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THE BUILDING



THE building is constructed around a central court, but instead of leaving this entirely vacant, a separate structure has been erected in its centre leaving a roughly horse-shoe shaped space around it. Most of this interior structure is devoted to a large and architecturally impressive delivery hall. The space here is not intended to be economically utilized. It should be remembered not only that beauty and harmony of proportion do not lack their utilitarian aspects, but also that this particular space, in most public buildings of this size and character, is precisely that which is not utilized for any purpose whatever. The hall immediately adjoins the stack pavilion on the north, and opens at the sides into the reference room and the open-shelf room, with which it communicates by short passages that are really bridges over the court-yard below although they do not appear to be so from the interior. The location of the public catalogue in the delivery hall near the entrance to the Reference Room makes it very accessible to users of the latter, and it is not far from the Open Shelf Room.

Both these rooms overlap the ends of the stack pavilion, so that there is immediate access to the stack from each. The south, or front pavilion of the building, which is the only one that does not open directly into the stack, contains, besides the entrance hall and stairways, the periodical reading-room and the Art Room, neither of which suffers from the lack of such connection.

All these rooms are on the main floor, which is one story above the street. The ground floor contains the Children's Room, Applied-Science Room, Stations Department and Newspaper Room, and a large number of service rooms and offices. In the basement below this are the ventilating and heating machinery, the carpenter and paint shops, the packing rooms, rooms for general storage and the bindery. No bindery was planned for the building, and when the establishment

of one became necessary, this was the only available space for it.

On the second floor, just above the main floor, are the Cataloguing and Order Department, the quarters of the Library School, various offices of administration, and a suite of rooms for work and storage connected with the Reference Department.

The fact that there are few public rooms on the Ground and Second floors, most of these being concentrated on the Main floor, is responsible for the lack of a public passenger elevator, although there are two service elevators in the rear. Owing to the extension of public use on other floors and to the fact that the main floor is really a story above the street, it would have been better to provide an elevator for readers. At present the service elevators are used for this purpose when necessary.

Ask for "The Central Library Building of the Public Library" (1912) an illustrated descriptive booklet; and "The St. Louis Public Library; an Account of its Work" (1912).

ENTRANCE HALL.

Note, on the left of the central doorway, as you enter, a wing-frame used for publicity. This is in charge of a staff committee, which assigns one panel to each department and one to each branch in succession. New material is posted monthly.

DELIVERY HALL.

This contains the main delivery desk, the registration desk, the public catalogue, the information desk, and space for general exhibits. Travel material is commonly displayed here on tables. The public and other catalogues are more fully described in the pamphlet noted just above. Note on the delivery desk the visible index to accessions, the display of books and the Today bulletin. Behind this desk the indicator on which red illuminated numerals appear, corresponding to numbers on the brass-checks given to applicants for

closed-shelf books and indicating that these books are ready. Note on the registration desk, under glass, the curve showing graphically the circulation of the Library from 1893 down to the current month.

REFERENCE ROOMS.

GENERAL REFERENCE, ART, APPLIED SCIENCE.

Reference work in the Central Library is done in three rooms, the Reference Room and the Art Room, adjoining each other on the main floor, and the Applied Science Room on the ground floor, just below. A considerable portion of the whole reference collection is in the stack. There are 6,300 volumes on open shelves in the Reference Room, 3,700 in glass cases in the Art Room and 4,700 on open shelves in the Applied Science Room. In the Art Room there are frequent exhibitions of paintings, prints, and art objects, on temporary screens and in glass cases. A certain amount of elementary reference work is also done in the Open Shelf and Periodical Rooms.

Note the method of filing pamphlets and clippings, the "Locality File" of picture postals in the main Reference Room; the portrait collection, the collection of 3000 lantern slides in the Art Room, arranged in trays in classified order, with reference cards and guides; also the file of clipped work of modern magazine illustrators and the framed pictures for circulation; and in the Applied Science Room, the framed wall-pictures of St. Louis industries and the collection of house-organs. The colored stars used on books denote those shelved in the three reference rooms. Ask for "Making Art Popular Through the Library" by Mary Powell, chief of the Art Department (1915).

OPEN SHELF ROOM.

Contains 21,000 books freely accessible, including a large part of the music collection, the large-type collection with its visible index and the new-book shelves. The Library circulates no music in sheets. Note the music catalogue, with its full analysis, and the way in which music rolls are noted thereon. No rolls not also in the general collection are catalogued.

No fiction is shown on the new book shelves. The collection in this room is fluid and hence there is no shelf list. The shelves here are treated as part of the stack.

READING ROOM.

Contains the current file of periodicals. The newspapers at the end of the room are none of them dailies, all daily papers being in the newspaper room on the floor below.

CENTRAL REGISTRATION.

There is only one registration file, kept at the central office, opening immediately behind the Registration Desk in the Delivery Hall. Readers may register at any branch or other agency of circulation, but cards issue from Central and are good at any agency in the city. Books taken out at any agency (including the Central Library) may be returned at any other agency.

Overdue postals are all sent out from the central office. The chief of the department will explain the new numbering system, in process of adoption, in which certain natural groups of card-holders will be recognized.

CHILDREN'S ROOM.

This is the largest of a chain of rooms for children, including one in each branch library throughout the city. They are operated in conjunction as a Children's Department, with a supervisor whose office is in the Central Building, immediately opposite the Children's Room on the ground floor, near the 13th St. entrance. The room itself is rather larger than most children's rooms, but it is so treated that its size does not detract from the home-like atmosphere. Note the fire-place with its Indian tiles, the pictures, and the case of illustrated editions, with its accompanying lists, also the Drama League collection of plays for children.

Ask for "How the Children of a Great City Get Their Books" by Effie L. Power, Supervisor of Children's Work from 1911 to 1914 (1914). Note in the Supervisor's office the collection of books on children's literature and lists of children's books, in process of formation.

BINDING DEPARTMENT.

The headquarters of this department are on the ground floor, in the south-west corner of the building. Here are done the office work, preparation of books and magazines for binding, general repairing, etc. Note the arrangement of magazine indexes, and the collection of worn-out books for missing pages (kept in the stack).

The bindery itself is on the basement floor, where it occupies two rooms. Note, among processes, the sewing and the lettering of covers; among machines, the perforator, the board-shears, the power cutter, the gluing machine and the embossing machine.

Ask for "New Books for Old," by Mary E. Wheelock, Chief of the Binding Department (1916).

NEWSPAPER ROOM.

Contains dailies only; weeklies are filed in the Periodical Room. There are no seats in this room. This eliminates the tramp element. The room is used only by persons who really desire to read, and there has been no complaint of discomfort. The papers are on files fastened to sloping "stand-up" desks.

EXTENSION WORK.

What is often known as extension work is carried on here in two departments—those of stations and travelling libraries; the former operates public agencies, including delivery stations and public deposit stations: the latter has charge of private or semi-public stations used only by designated individuals, such as those in schools, public and private, commercial and industrial houses, associations, settlements, clubs, etc. Offices of both departments are on the ground floor, near the 13th St. door. The Travelling Library Department has a section of the stack for its books, and the Stations Department has a large room for distribution and packing, acting as a general clearing-house.

Note system of distribution by "book-bins;" large lifts from receiving-room on floor below, maps in offices.

The assistants will explain our system of distribution by parcel-post and the co-operative work of the local post-office.

CATALOGUE AND ORDER DEPARTMENT.

This department, a combination of the two separate departments common to most public libraries, has a single head and a single staff of 35 persons, working together in one room. It takes charge of the books and is responsible for them from the moment the title is selected for purchase until the book is placed on the shelf.

Note the Repertory Catalogue of 850,000 printed cards, including those of the Library of Congress, John Crerar Library, Harvard and Chicago University libraries. Note also the multigraph and its use. The official catalogue here is also a Union Author Catalogue.

This department also receives and checks current periodicals, makes solicitation for donations and prepares the Monthly Bulletin for the press, under the Librarian's editorial supervision.

STAFF ACCOMMODATIONS.

These include separate locker rooms, with lavatories for men and women, besides individual lockers in various departments; a staff lunch room, with kitchen and pantries, a recreation room, with piano, a rest-room, and an assembly room for staff meetings. The boys are allowed to play ball in the courts and driveway, under supervision, and have space for gymnasium apparatus in the basement.

The lunch room is in charge of a committee of the staff. The custodian, whose salary is paid by the Library, takes care of the room, washes dishes and makes tea and coffee.

Afternoon tea is served in this room during the winter from 3:45 to 4:30 p. m. Each member of the staff who so desires is allowed ten minutes to take tea. The expense is met by subscription.

VISIBLE INDEXES.

The Library uses the visible indexing system in several places, among them the "new-book" index (about 1000 cards) on the main delivery desk, the index to coming lectures, exhibits and concerts, on the same desk, and the index to the Large Type Collection on the Open Shelf Room desk. The system used is the "Index Visible", the invention of Prof. Irving Fisher of Yale.

THE STACK.

This occupies the entire north pavilion of the building and includes seven tiers, shelving about 800,000 volumes, of which space for about 200,000 is now occupied. The library contains altogether nearly 500,000 volumes, including those in other parts of the building and in the branches. Much of the space unoccupied by books is now used for sorting purposes and for the storage of pamphlets, magazines and other such material. Additional space is available for shelving in the attic and the basement of this pavilion. The steel stack is of the type first introduced by the Art Metal Construction Co., but was built by the Library Bureau. The only mechanical transportation is vertical, horizontal carrying being done with trucks. The electric book-lifts are seldom used, assistants generally preferring to wheel trucks directly into the service elevators and accompany them to their destination. The floors are glass except on the first tier, where they are marble. This gives visitors an opportunity to compare the advantages and disadvantages of the two materials. Observe especially the difference in the reflection of light upon the lowest shelf. Note that the library uses no author-numbers.

PUBLIC WRITING ROOM.

Occupies at present the general pamphlet and clipping room, whose filing cases, arranged around the walls, do not interfere with the floor-space. Contains four tables seating 24 writers. Pens, ink, paper and

envelopes are free; paper and envelopes of higher grade, stamps and postals are on sale. The custodian receives no salary, but does notarial work, stenography and typewriting at current rates.

Note the stand with collection of free publicity material.

THE LIBRARY SCHOOL.

This is the third school to be operated directly by a public library, those of the New York and the Los Angeles Public Libraries having preceded it. It is an expansion of the Library Training Class operated on the present scale from 1910 and in a smaller way for several years previous. It occupies a class-room, principal's office, cloak-room, chief instructor's office and two lecture rooms, together with space in other parts of the building, for special work.

See the school circular of information.

